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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#)  
SUBJECT: PASOK DISARRAY VISIBLE AS NEW GREEK PARLIAMENT  
SWORN IN

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ATHENS 2838

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBIN QUINVILLE. REASON: 1.4 (B) A  
ND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: In a surprise move, embattled PASOK leader George Papandreou pushed PASOK MPs to give him a vote of confidence just as the new Parliament was about to be sworn in on September 26. His ill-timed move caused open dissent among party members, delayed the ceremony, and highlighted the party's divisions for invited guests and the press corps. Papandreou ultimately took a "show of hands" as affirmation of his leadership (at least in Parliament). However, it means very little; the real leadership decision will be taken at a party meeting November 11. In the meantime, Papandreou's effort to strengthen his position has left him looking even weaker. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) PASOK's internal divisions came under the spotlight at the September 26 swearing in of the new Greek Parliament. Since the election, dissatisfaction with PASOK's historically bad performance has resulted in an open leadership fight between current PASOK leader George Papandreou and feisty blogger (and former minister) Vangelis Venzelos. PASOK finally scheduled a crucial party meeting for November 11 to decide the issue; most PASOK members were relieved by the breathing space.

¶3. (C) So PASOK MPs were surprised when the normally confrontation-averse Papandreou, meeting with them just prior to the swearing in, suddenly asked whether he had their full support as leader of the PASOK parliamentary faction (leaving aside the broader question of the party itself). Reaction was heated, and visible to journalists. Finally, former PASOK leader Costas Simitis stepped in, arguing that there was no precedent for such a procedure. Papandreou eventually interpreted a "show of hands" as giving him the backing he sought and PASOK MPs entered the chamber -- where ND, LAOS, and KKE members (not to mention the entire diplomatic corps and guests) had been waiting for over half an hour.

¶4. (C) PASOK's disarray was the event's headline, completely overshadowing two other items: right-wing LAOS's parliamentary debut and the formal refusal of leftist Synaspismos deputies to take the required oath of office (due to its religious references). Parliament's two new Muslim MPs took an adapted form of the oath acceptable to their religious beliefs.  
COUNTRYMAN